



CENTER SCENE

NBSC Teams Work Hard to Establish the New Center

The charter for the Business Center's Implementation Team called for establishing Employee Input Teams so that employees could have a real voice in establishing the new Center. The numerous volunteers who came forward to staff the teams have all been hard at work for the past several months on team duties as well as performing their day-to-day work assignments.

The Logistics Employee Input Group was formed to identify impacts on space, determine infrastructure requirements, and identify the need for moves to adjust within the new space. The group completed its basic charter when it issued a finalized position paper on June 7, 1995.

Since that time the group has taken on the responsibility for coordinating the move of people assigned to the Business Center from 390 Union and within Building 50. It is always more efficient and timely to have all expertise represented and involved in a move. The Logistics Employee Input Group has demonstrated that working together toward a common goal is more productive.

The VALUE Team has been designing a survey instrument to find out what skills exist in the Business Center. In the short term, this survey will provide information

to help decisionmakers optimize employee placement on teams.

In the long-term, the survey data will encourage skill development by pointing the way to experts, potential educators, mentors, and coaches. It will be a source for work teams to tap into when seeking to fill a skill gap. It could also be a useful tool for employees wanting to share their expertise or practice a skill they particularly enjoy.

Recently, the VALUE team has been conducting focus groups to find out what skills need to be included. They are seeking input from many different sources to ensure that the survey is useful.

The Funding Input Team was set up to determine and describe a recommended funding process for the Business Center. The team has completed this task, defining a budget and funding process and submitting it to the Implementation Team.

In addition, the Funding Input Team has put the finishing touches on preparing a Center budget for FY 1996. This complex task was completed by examining historic Division expenditures, requesting input from the other input teams, and surveying staff salary data.

Each team member was recognized for their outstanding contributions at an All Employee's Meeting on July 17. Team members will be able to choose a non-monetary incentive award of their choice.

Jason Swegle Honored for Savings Bond Campaign Success

Jason Swegle was presented an On-the-Spot cash award at the Executive Leadership Team meeting on July 25 for his skilled leadership of the Service Center's bond campaign. Although he had no previous experience in this type of endeavor, Jason dedicated himself to developing effective marketing and interpersonal skills. As a result of his campaign, the Service Center met the goal for new participation in the Savings Bond program and exceeded the goal for increasing level of participation by a factor of four.

Thanks to everyone for helping make this year's campaign a success, and congratulations to Jason for a job well done!

Dave Maghan 1936-1995

David A. Maghan, Property Management Specialist at the Service Center for more than 17 years, died on Friday morning, July 14, after a brief illness. Funeral services were held the Crown Hill Chapel in Wheat Ridge, with interment at the Ft. Logan National Cemetery.

A long-time Service Center employee, Dave was known by many of us. We wish his family and friends well in this difficult time.

Personnel News

New Employees

None

Separations

Colin James III, Computer Specialist,
DW-131

Berlinda Santos, Procurement Clerk,
SC-651

Joanne Swartz, Computer Specialist,
SC-613

Douglas Spence, Land Surveyor,
DW-133

Employee Awards

SC and DW employees approved for awards between June 16 and July 17

Special Act Awards

Susan Goodman SC-214

Elaine Tracey DW-104

Paul Summers SC-212

Lynne Price SC-657

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The Bureau's Best Kept Secret

by Sandy Bowers

Despite regular directives publicizing its services, many BLM employees who find and use the Bureau Library refer to it as the "best kept secret" in the Bureau. What the library should be is the *first* place any Bureau employee goes to start an information search.

The BLM Library is a full-service, professionally staffed library that offers both research and quick-answer support comparable to any major university library system. While it owns a relatively small collection in comparison to the very broad information needs of the agency, the BLM Library has computer access to the collections of libraries around the world as well as to hundreds of databases covering a multitude of subject areas.

What can the Bureau Library do for you? The staff can locate almost any document for you, either by obtaining a photocopy to keep or a book on loan from a distant library. They can prepare a bibliography using commercial data files that list documents on almost any topic, and then do the document delivery from that search. They can also order publications for you.

The staff can provide consulting services to assist field offices with their own local library collection. Library staff also manage the journals that are subscribed to by the Service Center, making sure that all issues are delivered and that those issues get routed to the individuals who need to see each title.

The staff can find out who the experts are on a particular topic and put a researcher in touch with those experts. Legal materials can be located, based on topic or a particular case. The staff also publishes the *BLM Monthly Alert* and distributes the documents listed in that publication.

All of these services are provided Bureauwide, to any BLM employee, and all services are available with a simple phone call. It doesn't matter whether the BLM person works from a small office in Elko or just down the hall. The Library

staff serves Bureau personnel in every office.

One of the services that could be of substantial help to employees when they are working on a special project or an ongoing project is called a computerized literature search. This is available to all employees for work-related information needs. A computerized literature search results in a bibliography of journal articles, papers from proceedings, book titles, and reports covering any subject, tailor-made for the requestor. It can be on any topic, from the nesting habits of raptors to designing a computer program to track projects.

In each case, the requestor provides a list of keywords to the reference librarian that describe the kind of information that he or she is looking for. Those keywords are then used by the librarian to design a search that may span several online databases.

Searches can also be designed for ongoing information needs. Updates are run on a regular basis, keeping the requestor up-to-date on materials as they are published. This is called a DIALOG Alert search and can run for a few months or several years, depending on the length of the project or information need.

After any kind of search is performed, the requestor receives a personalized bibliography and can request documents from that search from the library's interlibrary loan staff. It doesn't matter whether the materials are owned by our own library or not. Through interlibrary loans, the Bureau Library has access to thousands of library collections around the world.

One question the staff is regularly asked is whether the BLM Library keeps all of the materials donated to it by Bureau personnel. The answer is that whether the library keeps each item or not, the staff will retrieve that document for the customer when it is needed. The item may be in the BLM Library collection, or staff might access it from another library. It is not cost effective or space efficient to try to keep everything locally. However, as a professionally staffed library, the Bureau Library has resource-sharing agreements with other libraries around the world. The staff *will* locate the items you need.

To have the library help you with your information needs, give them a call or drop by. For assistance call 236-6648 or 6649. The staff looks forward to your call.



Library staff members are l-r: Sandy Bowers, Anna Chetlain, Aki Araki, Barbara Klassen, Talitha Cumi, Barbara Campbell, and Joan Penzien (not shown: Crystal Trujillo).

Closing the Books

by Todd Adler

At the end of each fiscal year, the BLM Division of Finance has to close the books. All of the accounting transactions for the year must be recorded and summarized so that we can close out the income, expense, and some of the budgetary accounts, and report on the results of our operations. A final review on the status of funds that were obligated and expended during the year is also completed. The Bureau obviously can't spend more than Congress has authorized us to spend.

Now, you may be thinking, what could be involved in closing the books; a few adjusting and closing entries and WHAM, the books are closed. Unfortunately, there is much more involved than that.

Year-end closing requires a substantial amount of coordination. There is a considerable amount of work to be coordinated and completed by individuals within the Finance Division. In addition, the Finance Division coordinates with many field offices to establish year-end closing cutoff dates for data transmitted to the Finance Division and for data entered remotely by field offices into the Federal Financial System (FFS).

Many transactions are processed in the last month of the fiscal year because budget spending authority expires at the end of the

fiscal year. Thus the sheer volume of transactions to process is a real challenge.

In addition, the Finance Division performs a substantial amount of behind-the-scenes work at year's end. Accountants, systems accountants, systems analysts, computer specialists, and many others are involved in preparing for year-end close. In order to get a better understanding of the year-end close process, it helps to understand the complexity of FFS.

FFS is a computerized accounting system that records both budgetary and financial (proprietary) transactions. FFS resides on an IBM mainframe computer. It contains approximately 26 million BLM financial records. There are also approximately 500 financial application and reference tables used in FFS. With so many records, it is necessary to perform many of the year-end closing procedures using batch processing.

Many of the closing procedures must first be tested in a separate FFS test application before running in the FFS production environment. In addition, many FFS table entries need to be modified for year-end close, as well as established for the new fiscal year.

Since the fiscal year ends on September 30, why is the Finance Division so busy

through October? The reason is that closing the books is only half the work. We also have to prepare for opening the books for the new fiscal year.

There are many steps involved in closing and opening the books. First, all of the September accounting transactions must be recorded and the monthly close must be run. Next, the adjusting entries must be completed and another monthly close run with the year-end close following it.

Finally, the accounting system (FFS) must be set up properly for the new fiscal year. This involves establishing numerous budgetary entries in FFS. Also, data clearing must be performed on certain FFS records subsequent to the year-end close.

Incidentally, the overall process just explained does not address the financial reporting and budgetary reporting that are required. Financial statements must be prepared after the end of the fiscal year in accordance with the requirements of the Chief Financial Officer's Act.

The entire process of closing the books begins in July and ends in November, with most of the effort being completed in the months of September and October. Once the year-end close is done, most of us are anxious to take some well-deserved annual leave!

NBS Book Hits the Street

The National Biological Survey, or NBS, has released a 530-page, full-color book entitled *Our Living Resources: A Report to the Nation on the Distribution, Abundance, and Health of U.S. Plants, Animals, and Ecosystems*. And several SC employees played a key role in its production.

The Technology Transfer staff's Peter Doran served as the graphics editor, designing and directing production of each and every page. Ray Boyd of the Branch of Biological Resources contributed as Science Editor for the Terrestrial Ecosystems section. And Carl Anderson and Sherri Hendren (SC-657) coordinated and inspected the massive printing effort.

Peter has begun work on a second, similar project for NBS.

Managing Safety Process Improvements

by Norman P. Duquette, Occupational Safety & Health Specialist

Both BLM Director Dombeck and Secretary Babbitt have recently gone on public record as committing to "Zero Tolerance" for unsafe actions and "Zero Damage" to people, property, and the environment. The behavior-based approach to safety is one way to achieve this goal.

The behavior-based approach focuses strictly on observable, measurable actions critical to the error-free performance of a particular job process. Behaviors include such things as using personal protective equipment such as keyboard wrist rests or protective clothing, practicing good housekeeping, using proper lifting techniques, and maintaining proper body position when

performing tasks (ergonomics). These behaviors are "critical" to error-free performance and loss control management, regardless of any attitudes about them as compliance requirements.

Although attitudes influence behaviors, they are difficult to observe and measure. In the attitude-based safety approach, well-meaning managers tell you, "We have good employees here, and if we can just get them to be more aware of safety, then they will behave more safely..." or, "We need to get at the attitudes that underlie our em

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Fighting Fires: A Win-Win Situation

by Susan Goodman

Responding to wildland fires, floods, and other natural disasters has become an important mission for 40 individuals who work with the Service Center, Denver Washington staff, and Colorado State Office. These individuals have become part of BLM's fire program for various reasons.

Many wanted to help out for altruistic reasons, while others sought to return to their roots, to where they began their careers, to on-the-ground field work. The rest seem to enjoy the experience of everyone working toward a common goal; the fire line is one place in the Federal Government where team work has been practiced successfully for years.

Employees who want to fight fires must first take the Basic ICS (Incident Command Systems) course (I-200). This teaches individuals the basic terminology of an overhead team that would be in charge of a fire or other natural disaster and helps the employee decide what positions they might want to hold in the future in ICS. I-200 does not qualify individuals for any position except to drive and work at the warehouse at the Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center. However, specialists such as a cartographers, radio operators, or rehabili-

tation experts can perform these duties on a fire after taking the I-200 course.

Most employees get very excited about expanding their knowledge once they have been on a fire and end up taking further courses, either in the classroom or through self-study. Some entry-level positions for people who take these additional courses include timekeepers, dispatch recorders, and firefighters. Line positions require that an individual pass the 5-minute step test or run 1 and 1/2 miles in 11 minutes and 30 seconds.

Our co-workers who fight fires go beyond fireline duties and fire camps, giving presentations and demonstrations to promote fire prevention in the Denver Metro Area. Melinda Walker and Terri Jeffries gave a portable fire shelter demonstration and fire prevention talk at the Take your Child to Work Day. Tom Sadowski, a cost unit leader on fires, has taken a class of school kids for a day and taught them fire prevention. Last year, the Service Center sent fire prevention/Smokey packages to over 1000 school kids in the Metro Area.

Fire Information Officer Karen Miranda, along with Technology Transfer videographers Randy Hayes and Bob Kyle, helped out at the South Canyon Memorial on

July 6 in Glenwood Springs. Last year, two of our employees were on the South Canyon fire. DW employee Bill Twenhöfel, who is now assigned to the California State Office, was on a Call When Needed (CWN) Helicopter as a helicopter crew person and helped remove the 14 fatalities from the hillside. Melinda Walker interpreted infrared imagery on South Canyon to help locate hot spots on the fire. Twenty other Service Center and Denver Washington employees worked in nine states last year on numerous fires.

Participation helps Service Center and Denver Washington employees establish and maintain informal contacts with their field customers. This helps the program participants to better understand the needs of the field. This is particularly true when the employees work in software development and finance. (Relatively few of these employees have ever had the opportunity to work in a natural resource field office).

Supervisors are encouraged to allow their employees to participate in BLM's fire program. Participation gives these individuals a fresh perspective on the Bureau's mission and their own ability to contribute positively and meaningfully.

continued

Managing Safety Process Improvements

by Norman P. Duquette, Occupational Safety & Health Specialist

employees' behavior; only then will we begin to see our accident rates come down."

Attitudes are difficult to change directly; however, behavior change is not as difficult. A good example of this is the attitude toward using seat belts. As the behavior of wearing seat belts has changed over time in our society, so have attitudes toward wearing them; wearing seat belts has become socially acceptable. However, many people remain unpersuaded that the proven injury prevention potential of seat belts justifies the perceived inconvenience of "buckling up," so they refuse to do so.

To improve job performance and productivity and to significantly reduce the costs of preventable accidents, organiza-

tions must focus on the one area that employees, properly motivated, skilled, and equipped for their jobs can directly control: their task-related actions. "Know-how" (knowledge), plus "can-do" (skill), must equal "will-do" (behavior), if the concept of "zero tolerance" for preventable losses is ever to take hold as a reality.

One of the first tasks in the behavior-based approach is to identify critical safety-related behaviors and then write measurable operational definitions of them. This forms the basis for observation and feedback for accident prevention and continuous process improvements.

Critical behaviors can be inferred by analyzing accident and "near-miss" data as

well as analyzing known operational hazards and environmental exposures experienced by knowledgeable employees. In successful organizations, site assessments of safety strengths and areas for potential improvement are done by empowered local safety and health committees, or steering committees, using a variety of source materials and data. Guidance and assistance can be provided by safety and health management professionals.

As an organization implements behavior-based safety, the process becomes institutionalized in new ways of doing business. "Will do" behavior and attitudes ultimately result in fewer losses and increased productivity.